



DRAFT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ROSS VALLEY FLOOD PROTECTION AND WATERSHED PROGRAM

- 1. What is the Ross Valley Flood Protection and Watershed Program?** After the devastating flood of 2005, the Ross Valley communities came together and agreed that something had to be done to prevent flooding. Elected leaders from throughout the Valley asked the County to study the problem and propose solutions. Engineers with expertise in hydrology, water resources, and flood protection went to work. They created a digital model of the Ross Valley watershed, examined numerous combinations of solutions, and ultimately recommended a regional, watershed-based approach comprised of many projects – removing constriction points, maximizing capacity in the creek channel, and holding back waters in detention basins. In combination, these measures would contain a flood like that experienced in 2005.
- 2. Who is involved in this program?** The program is a regional effort led by the County of Marin Department of Public Works and Marin County Flood Control District Zone 9 in partnership with the City of Larkspur, the Towns of Fairfax, Ross, and San Anselmo and the unincorporated communities of Sleepy Hollow, Oak Manor, Kentfield, and Greenbrae. Others involved include environmental, business, and community groups.
- 3. What are the Program's Goals?**
 - Reducing the risk of flooding and associated damage in the Ross Valley.
 - Integrating environmental enhancement/restoration with the flood mitigation efforts.
 - Leveraging funds obtained through the Ross Valley Storm Drainage Fee to obtain additional state and federal funding for the program.
- 4. Why Flood Protection and Environmental Stewardship?** This is a total watershed program. Unlike in decades past, flood control is now approached within the context of watershed-wide models. In fact, state and federal funding sources require that local flood mitigation projects incorporate environmental stewardship because of the heightened concern about endangered species, water quality, and general environmental health. By enhancing natural creek functions, we not only increase our watershed's ability to handle flood flows, but also can improve water quality, and address fish passage concerns.
- 5. What level of flooding are we preparing for, beyond 2005 levels?** The overall long-term goal of the Ross Valley Flood Program is to contain the 100-year flood. The 2005 flood was roughly a 100-year flood. The 1982 flood was slightly larger; carrying about 5 percent more flow.
- 6. What is a detention basin and how do they work?** Detention basins are storm water management facilities designed to protect against flooding by storing excess water for a limited period of time. After significant study of the Ross Valley watershed, five detention basin locations were identified to alleviate flooding in the watershed. These locations are: Loma Alta (Fairfax), Lefty Gomez Field (Fairfax), Memorial Park (San Anselmo), Red Hill Park (San Anselmo),



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and Phoenix Lake (Ross). Except for Phoenix Lake, the basins will remain dry and would not be flooded in most years.

Detention basins work by temporarily capturing and holding back large amounts of fast-moving water and then releasing it slowly into a creek or other water body following a storm. You can think of detention basins like traffic lights on city streets. Just as the lights manage the flow of traffic to help avoid accidents, detention basins help manage the flow of water to help avoid floods. Both the traffic lights and the detention basins offer protection for people and property.

7. **Can we fix flooding without detention basins? Why not try some other flood prevention methods first, like stream modifications? Was a thorough analysis done to see what methods would work?** An analysis was performed by Stetson Engineers, a local firm, using hydrologic and hydraulic computer models which simulate the 2005 flood. The models were able to test various methods to prevent flooding. The goal was to fully contain the 2005 flood within the creek. Using the models, the first method tested was to enlarge the creek to the maximum extent practical, without harming the sensitive environment or encroaching too far onto adjacent private properties. But the model results showed that that would not be enough, so detention basins were added to hold the water back. Model results showed that the enlarged channel could contain the 2005 flood if the five detention basins were in place.
8. **Why wouldn't we cut down the trees in the creeks to ensure better/more water flow?** If all the trees are cut down and removed, the creek still wouldn't have capacity and some trees are vital for anchoring creek banks and providing habitat for animals/fish. Some trees in middle of creek may need to be removed.
9. **What other mitigation can we do now, given the major program projects won't be completed for several years?** Property owners are urged to take responsibility for maintaining the creek on their property. The County will work with the Cities and Towns to take care of areas with major debris and an effort should be made by neighborhoods for annual creek cleaning days.